Major Charles E. Stanton

By EDWARD F. O'DAY

(Major Charles E. Stanton and Mrs. Stanton were here early in the week on their way to New York, where the major has been ordered to report and will be stationed at Governor's Island. He and Mrs. Stanton have made their home in San Francisco for years and the most recent contribution to "Varied Types," which is conducted by Jack Bonnett and Edward F. O'Day in their excellent publication, "Town Talk," contains the very interesting sketch of the major found below. Major and Mrs. Stanton formerly lived here and took a prominent part in the affairs of the city twenty years ago. They received a great welcome upon their return "home."—Editor.)

"HOW are you ,Major?"

"Well as a man can be who is presiding at his own obsequies.'

That's the way the Major expresses it, exaggerating the situation a little. The exaggeration is pardonable. You see, the Major is going away from San Francisco, and because he loves San Francisco as he loves no other city, his departure has induced the mood funereal. The mood is contagious, and all his friends—a legion hereabouts—have caught it. Not to put too fine a point upon it, the Major will be missed.

That's the worst of army life, as all your army friends have probably told you—you get attached to a place, and along comes the order from Washington to pack and be off to some other station. For six years the Major has been here as depot quartermaster. He was no stranger when he came, not by any means, and in six years one puts down a lot of roots into congenial soil. The Major has a choice circle of friends here. He is beloved in two clubs—The Family and the Olympic. No dinner where the good fellows get together is a success without him. Using the adjective in the best sense of its application I should say with conviction that Major Stanton is one of the most popular men in San Francisco.

Mindful of a soldier's lot the Major anticipated a change of station. He hoped that he might be sent from here to Honolulu. But the officer proposes, and the War Department disposes. The depot quartermaster at Governor's Island was transferred to Honolulu, and Major Stanton goes to Governor's Island. Aside from being quite a distance from San Francisco, Governor's Island is a nice billet. Indeed, none is considered nicer. The commanding officer of the army lives on Governor's Island, there is lots of social activity, and all that sort of thing. Besides, Governor's Island is right in the shadow of the Statue of Liberty, and now that the goddess has been all lit up you can sit on Governor's Island and bathe yourself in her electric splendor. Doubtless Major Stanton recognizes all these advantages. But he continues to love San Francisco.

Major Stanton has been eighteen years in the army. Eight years he spent in the Philippines, two in Chicago, and eight in our town, though not continuously. But those eight years are only a small part of Major Stanton's local experience. He came here first at the age of eleven. Major Stanton was born fifty-eight years ago in Illinois, and crossed the plains to Denver, a baby in arms. His father followed the Union Pacific roadbed as it was built westward, and was running the Railroad hotel at Promontory, Utah, when that spot achieved fame as the site of the driving of the last spike that united the Union and Central Pacific. Ten-year-old Charlie Stanton was no mere spectator on that historic occasion, though you won't find his portrait in Tom Hill's picture. Charlie was a friend of Big Jule, the Frenchman who drove the U. P. engine, and had the freedom of the cab. He was in the cab when the two engines bumped their cowcatchers in token of the linking up of the two systems.

"Sharlie, you ringa da bell," said Big Jule; so when the champagne bottles were broken o the noses of the engines, Charlie started ringi the bell, and kept on ringing. Governor Stanford was making a speech a little way down the track, but nobody could hear him on account of the clanging of the engine bell.

"Somebody kill that damkid," said somebody. And a strong arm yanked Charlie Stanton through the cab window and sent him flying through space.

"If I hadn't landed in a cinder heap I'd have broken my neck,' says the Major.

When he was eleven Stanton made his first acquaintance with San Francisco. He entered the fifth grade at the Lincoln school. Miss Roper was his teacher, and "Old Whiskers" Marks was the principal. For further particulars consult any of the old Lincoln boys.

After a term at the Lincoln grammar Stanton went home—home was Nevada then—and in '73 he passed through San Francisco on his way to Santa Clara College. He stayed there three years. Father Varsi was president, and his teachers were Kenna, Dosella, Raggio, Leonard, Kelly and Penasco. If you think these are unimportant names, ask Downey Harvey, or Charlie Eber of the Crocker National, or Billy Schofield (son of the general), or "Buck" (otherwise Romolo) Soto, the lawyer—they were schoolmates of the Major's, as were Mervyn Donahue, Alcide and Billy Veuve of San Jose, the Ryland boys, and Bob and Jim Enright.

From Santa Clara Major Stanton went back to Nevada, to no less a place that Pioche, where he mined at the Raymond and Ely, doing a little of everything from running the elevator to timbering. And then he went to Yale.

At Yale Stanton's room mate was Will Harper of the publishing house. One day Will Harper and Charlie Stanton dined with Will's uncle, Fletcher Harper.

"Are you related to Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary of War-" asked Fletcher Harper.

"He was my father's brother," said Charlie Stanton.

"Is that so?" said Fletcher Harper. "Well, your uncle came near hanging me once."

And he told the story. It was during the Civil war, when Fletcher Harper, a young man, was assisting his father in the management of Harper's Weekly. One day father and son were summoned to Washington to see Stanton. The war secretary was in a towering rage.

"Are you two responsible for that?" he demanded, showing them a cartoon of Lincoln in Harper's Weekly.

"That's treason," Stanton continued when they had acknowledged responsibility, "and I warn you that if it ever happens again I'll hang you both higher than Haman's cat! Now get to hell out of here, and remember what I say."

Let us not tarry with Charlie Stanton while he goes broke farming in Minnesota, or sells mineral water in Idaho for Senator Clark, or holds political office in Salt Lake, or attempts, disastrously, to sell fire extinguishers in San Francisco. He determined to seek a paymaster's job in the army, and that brings us to another story involving his celebrated uncle Edwin. Stanton went to Washington to enlist the influence of his friend Senator Frank Cannon. Cannon made no headway at first. Then one day Stanton mentioned casually that he was the nephew of Lincoln's war secretary. Cannon threw up his hands.

"And you kept it from me all this time!" he exclaimed. "I can get E. M. Stanton's nephew appointed to anything in the gift of the president!"

Senator Cannon immediately made an appointment with Presidet McKinley, and Stanton went with his sponsor to the White House, though without much hope; he had been there before, and McKinley had been cold.

"Mr. President," said Senator Cannon, "you will be interested in this young man when you hear that his father was the brother of E. M. Stanton."

"My boy! My boy! My boy! cried McKinley with emotion, gathering Stanton to his breast. "I had the honor of receiving my commission as major from the hands of your revered uncle. I was at Steubenville last year when his ashes were interred beneath a fitting monument to his greatness. The soil of Ohio is hallowed by his clay. He was a small man in stature, but mentally a giant, and a perfect foil to the great Lincoln. And he was a fiery pepper-pot, a fiery pepper-pot!"

President McKinley said much more in eulogy of Steubenville's great son, and then:

"What was it you wanted?"

Stanton spoke of the paymastership.

"Certainly! Certainly! Anything! Anything for the nephew of that great man."

And so Paymaster Stanton was conferred upon his country. Who says republics are ungrateful?

I mentioned that Major Stanton held political office in Salt Lake. He was county clerk when the fees under the territorial system netted him $18,000 a year; he was a member of the Constitutional Convention, and voted cheerfully and sincerely to abolish his snap; but when Major Stanton thinks of his political career he remembers his first office, and a rude awakening from youthful pipe dreams of political importance. He had been elected city clerk of Salt Lake. This office included the lowlier one of dog catcher (by proxy). One Galeazzi applied to City Clerk Stanton for appointment to the dog catching billet. Stanton was troubled, and sought counsel of his political mentor C. C. Goodwin. (Need I add that Judge Goodwin is still a power in Salt Lake, a vigorous-minded octogenarian with a pen of gold?)

"Judge," said Stanton, "Galeazzi wants to be dog catcher."

"Well, appoint him," said Goodwin.

"Yes," said Stanton, "but Gally's a tough nut, and might not be a credit to my administration. I must be careful of my reputation."

"Hell!" said Goodwin. "You lose the reputation you've got and it'll be the making of you!"

Galeazzi started dog catching next morning.

Stanton went into the army in '98. In 1901 he returned from the Philippines, and visited Salt Lake. It was his first reunion with his Utah friends since donning a uniform, and everybody turned out to greet and honor the conquering hero. Stanton admits that it was a proud occasion—until he met Judge Goodwin.

"How are you, Charlie," said Goodwin.

"All right," answered Stanton in a hoarse whisper, "only I've caught a cold and can't talk."

"Great heavens!" answered Goodwin, "think of what a relief it would be to Salt Lake if you never talked again!"

You are right in inferring that Major Stanton is some talker. He's the fastest talker in San Francisco, but I never heard of anybody getting

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